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University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

Office of News and Publications
Missoula, MT 59812
(406) 243-2522

July 20, 1990

UM PROJECT TACKLES PROBLEMS OF COACHING YOUTHS

By Carol Susan Woodruff
UM News and Publications

Despite their best intentions, coaches all too often turn children's sports into psychologically or physically negative experiences for the participants, a University of Montana faculty member says.

To combat that problem, Cindy Garthwait, a visiting assistant professor of social work, has used an almost \$5,000 grant from the Montana Children's Trust Fund to develop a curriculum, a poster and public service announcements focused on positive ways to motivate young competitors.

"Coaching is a difficult endeavor, and there is usually little training, especially for volunteer coaches," she says. "To be a good coach, you need to understand not only children but also yourself so the need to win isn't imposed on children who just want to have fun in sports."

Coaches aren't the only adults who can take the fun out of children's sports. "The over-involved parent can be just as damaging to a child as a negative coach," Garthwait says.

As part of her project, she's assembled a book of readings by sports and child psychologists, sociologists and coaching educators;

- more -

class exercises; and discussion topics. The focus is on building children's self-esteem, preventing injuries and differentiating between winning and success. As her poster says, "Winning isn't everything, but feeling like a winner is."

Garthwait's primary audience is students in UM's health and physical education department, which she hopes will soon begin using her curriculum. Other schools and organizations such as the YMCA and Little League could also make good use of the curriculum, Garthwait says.

"If coaches are given the opportunity to develop positive skills, they'll have a more rewarding experience, and the kids will have fun and learn as well," she says.

To obtain a copy of the curriculum, contact Cindy Garthwait, University of Montana Department of Social Work, Rankin Hall, Missoula, MT 59812; 243-2954.

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